Monkey Sees, Ditto Does, Cost U.S. $2000 a Year

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It took some Army cost-cutters in Maryland to latch onto it, but monkey business at Ft. Detrick was costing Uncle Sam more than $2000 a year and a good bit of old-fashioned military morale, a straight-laced Defense Department report reveals.

Rep. Hervey G. Machen (D-Md.) dug this little nugget out of the Army Materiel Command's "Work Management Program" report for fiscal 1965, which tells how things like monkeys, dirty venetian blinds and vibrating binoculars ran up $6.9 million in needless costs.

The mischievous monkeys, who live in 50 cages at the Fort's biological laboratory, apparently learned a clever trick with the small latches attached to their refuse pans.

"Monkeys kept in these cages for an extended period of time learned to slip this spring latch from the inside," the report informs. The result: Garbage tumbled to the bottom of the cages and it took two man-hours a day longer than it should to clean up, the budget men noted.

Somebody finally devised a new latch, Machen said, adding that the Army also outlined in true military-report style something more than just savings. "Elimination of undesirable work results in the intangible benefit of increased morale," the Fort stated matter-of-factly.

The grimy blinds were at the Edgewood Arsenal, where a detail had been assigned to take them down periodically, haul them to a cleaning area and then take them back. A portable washer-dryer set was obtained and $5540 saved.

Savings of $4768 were chalked up at one Army base by vibrating binoculars (to shake dirt loose) before cleaning them instead of afterwards, the Congressman noted. It seems that 78 per cent of the sets were being sent right back for recleaning until this switch was pulled.

At another base, they saved $1365 by not stapling "location cards" on milk stools all the time and then prying them off with scissors. And when they cut messhall delivery crews from three men to two by making the driver help unload, they whittled away "3.2 hours per trip x52 trips x$.125 per hour," the report notes.